

The Waldorf- Astoria.



The Waldorf-Astoria

FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

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THE BELLEVUE - STRATFORD . Philadelphia .

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THE WINDSOR Montreal

The Story
of
The Waldorf-Astoria

By
EDWARD HUNGERFORD



Illustrations by
LOUIS H. RUYL

58
1895.

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SEYMOUR DURST

AVERY
DURST

The Story of The Waldorf-Astoria

IN the spring of the year 1890, Rumor went through the streets of New York town whispering that William Waldorf Astor was about to build a huge hotel upon the site of his house at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-third Street. "It is to have all of five hundred rooms," whispered the sly dame, "five hundred rooms, and more than half of them with private baths." . . . She threw out other hints as well—of a tavern to be built with an elegance and finesse such as neither New York, nor any other city, for that matter, had yet known. "One certainly would expect the Astors to do the thing handsomely," was her final shaft.

William Waldorf Astor had permitted the idea of a hotel upon the site of his Thirty-third Street house to grow in his imagination. He talked it over at great length with his estate agent, Abner Bartlett, a man in whose experience and judgment he put large confidence. In the hotel idea Mr. Bartlett had anticipated his chief. He had both imagination and judgment. Both were forever tempered with a vast sagacity. Into his judgment there entered, even before William Waldorf Astor had fully made up his own mind, the determination that a great new hotel should be built at the Thirty-third Street corner. One day Bartlett bespoke that determination.

"I think that we shall build that hotel," he said slowly.

William Waldorf Astor turned his glance toward him. Doubt still ruled him. He was not quite convinced of the wisdom of the project.

"It will never pay, there at Thirty-third Street," was his reply.

"Oh, yes," contradicted Abner Bartlett. "I have thought the thing all out and I am now positive that it will pay."

Astor was quiet for a few minutes. Finally he turned toward his agent, saying:

"Have you got a man to look after a house like that, if we should decide to build it?"

The agent did not hesitate.

"I have the man," he said, quietly.

"Who?"

"That man over in the little Bellevue, in Philadelphia—George Boldt."

Bartlett knew Boldt. With Mrs. Bartlett, he was in the habit of going occasionally to the Bellevue for a few days' rest and vacation. Once Boldt had given up his own suite just to accommodate them.

At that time there probably was nothing else just like that little Philadelphia hotel in all creation; certainly not in the United States. It was really a very tiny tavern indeed, of red brick—it possessed but thirty-six sleeping rooms—standing in Broad Street. With its mansard roof it was only four stories in height, all told, and it was not until a number of years after Boldt took it over that an elevator was installed within it. Yet it was a homey little place, and when, in 1904, it was finally demolished—upon the completion of the magnificent Bellevue-Stratford upon an adjoining corner—its passing was mourned sincerely by whole generations of old Philadelphians.

George Boldt was the manner of man, then, who was chosen to make the operation of the new Astor Hotel—it soon was settled that it

was to be called the Waldorf—his life work. He accepted after consultation with his wife. And plans were made for the construction of the house. Within a few weeks after the acceptance by the Boldts of the new house, Henry J. Hardenbergh, an architect who was to have considerable experience in the development of the modern hotel in New York, was engaged upon its preliminary plans. And it was not long thereafter before the Astors moved out of their comfortable red-brick house and the wreckers were engaged in its demolition.

In the late summer of 1891 the gaunt steel framework of the new Waldorf began to show itself over the edge of the tall, tight fence which the contractors had built about the site of the hotel. Boldt, although never relinquishing the full control of the Bellevue, took the house at 13 West Thirty-third Street (immediately adjoining the Waldorf site), not only as personal living quarters, but also as an office until the new hotel should be finished. Literally he slept on the job, when he slept at all. At no time during the long period of construction was he far from it. When he did go it was either to gain ideas or furnishings for the house. That was long before the day of standardization in hotel furnishings; years before some efficiency genius was to evolve the idea of rooms exactly alike on each bedroom floor of the modern hostelry, and furnished alike, down to the smallest detail.

The original intention was to have the Waldorf eleven stories in height. Finally, in deference to a request of Mrs. Boldt, this was increased to thirteen stories. The wife of the proprietor of the new house had a sort of superstitious affection for the number thirteen. So thirteen stories into the blue skies over Manhattan went the brand new Waldorf. From the first the idea was to create a super tavern with as little of the typical hotel features in evidence



FROM A DRAWING BY LOUIS H. RUYL
TEA IN THE ROSE ROOM OF THE ASTORIA
In all the World, no Finer Dining Palace than This, the Most Formal of all the Restaurants of the Waldorf-Astoria

as was humanly possible. There were to be 530 rooms, of which some 450 would be sleeping rooms. There were to be 350 private bath-rooms, a feature which alone made a tremendous impression upon the high-grade traveling public of the nineties.

Construction proceeded slowly through the summer of 1891 and 1892. In the latter year it was possible so to enclose the uncompleted building as to permit the decorators and the furnishings to come into it. But at no time was the construction hurried. Few large buildings in New York have ever been fabricated so deliberately—and so thoroughly. This was one of the few definite wishes of William Waldorf Astor. The plans for the hotel having been finished, in compliance with his announced plan, the owner returned to England. The few orders or suggestions that he made in connection with the building of the house were chiefly given by cable. As far as is known, he never entered it after its completion but twice, and then but for a few minutes each time. He passed quickly through its corridors and did not lift his eyes from the floor.

Finally—it was a wintry day in February, 1893, when a great banner was affixed to the front of the new Waldorf. In large black letters New Yorkers read upon it:

Mr. Boldt announces the opening of
the Waldorf, Wednesday, March 15,
1893. Temporary offices at 13 West
Thirty-third Street.

The actual christening of the original Waldorf took place on the evening of the 14th of March. For months it had been anticipated as a large social function. A huge concert, in aid of St. Mary's Free Hospital for Children and under the direction of Mrs. Richard Irvin, formed the excuse for bringing a most representative group of New Yorkers to the opening of the new hotel. A dismal downpour—a sharp

spring rain was doing its utmost to dampen the party—failed to keep away a great throng of folk. More than fifteen hundred men and women attended the affair. The New York Symphony Orchestra, under the leadership of Walter Damrosch, which had been donated for the evening by Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, was the chief feature of the program.

The state apartments were occupied for the first time on April 15th—just thirty days after the formal opening of the house. A party of distinguished Spaniards, on their way to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, were housed in them. In this group—the precursor of a long line of prominent official visitors to the United States to be entertained under the hospitable roof of the Waldorf—were the Duke and Duchess of Veragua, the Honorable Christopher Columbus y Aguilera, the Honorable Charles Aguilera, the Honorable Maria del Pilar Columbus y Aguilera, the Marquis Barbolis and his son, the Honorable Pedro Columbus de la Corda. Later came the delightful Princess Eulalie and her suite. On the 19th of April this ducal party held a reception in the hotel which was attended by a hundred of the most prominent women of New York, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Chicago. It was a most elaborate affair. Elaborateness was a peculiar perquisite of the Waldorf. It fairly lived on pomp and ceremony.

Pomp and circumstance. The large Waldorf. The luxurious Waldorf. The glorious Waldorf. How New York—huge, calm, sophisticated New York—gazed and gaped at the splendors of its newest tavern. People flocked to it by the hundreds and by the thousands; they engaged tables in all of its restaurants days and even weeks in advance. They filled its sleeping rooms. When they could not do any of these



FROM A DRAWING BY LOUIS H. RUYL

THE WALDORF-ASTORIA

Standing at the Important Corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street, it Dominates the Great Section of New York that Lies Round About It

things they just came—open-eyed—to return, more open-eyed than before. For these last, professional guides were engaged; probably for the first time in the history of any hotel. These young men, glib of tongue and pleasing of manner, were hired to direct strangers through the hotel and to spare no details of information in regard to it.

As the spring of ninety-three turned into summer, Boldt came to be distinctly worried about the success of his venture. A most temperamental man at all times, he fell into a depressed habit of going to his friends and asking them if he had not made a mistake in going into such a whale of an enterprise. Would he not have done far better if he had remained content with the comfortable earnings of the little Bellevue? Assuredly it *had* been a mistake opening the house almost at the threshold of oncoming summer. Then, too, the Chicago fair was not going as well as had been anticipated. The great flow of European visitors that it was to bring into America—and who could reasonably be counted on for stays in New York, both coming and going—failed completely to materialize. And the shadow of oncoming hard times—the disastrous panic of 1893—was already upon the land. No wonder that Boldt worried. And worried long and worried late. On one Sunday of that depressing summer of 1893 there were forty guests in the house, and 970 servants upon the payroll that day. He had excellent cause to worry.

Yet Boldt never dismissed a single servant or in any way lowered his standard of service. He was a stickler for details. Himself an untiring worker, he expected nothing less of his associates. Seemingly he was on the job twenty-four hours a day; actually he was generally on duty from nine o'clock in the morning until about three o'clock the next morning. Sometimes in the early evening he would retire to

his apartments for a quiet game or two of solitaire or to read—he was an inveterate reader. But he was always down upon the office floor before the theatre crowd came pouring in.

In no department of the hotel—not even the office—did Boldt show a keener interest than in the cuisine. Here his stickling for detail became almost a passion. He was particularly keen that the waiter—the contact point between the hotel kitchen and the hotel patron—should be as nearly one hundred per cent. perfect as was humanly possible. It was his endeavor from the outset that every man engaged for the service of his dining-rooms should be able to speak French, German and English. The idea of a really international hotel always had a tremendous appeal for him. He is quoted at that early day as saying:

"I intend to have my force so selected that a man from Berlin or Paris can come to the Waldorf fresh from the steamer and have his orders perfectly understood."

In this phase of his life work Boldt was particularly fortunate in having a great assistant—the *maitre d'hotel*, Oscar Tschirky. And because Oscar's fame as an *hotelier* is hardly less than that of his great chief, I may be permitted to halt this narrative long enough for a brief paragraph or two about him.

This Swiss-American—he is a native of the Canton of Neufchatel—is today one of the notable figures of New York. Not to know Oscar, of the Waldorf, is really not to know New York. He has been with the house since the day of its opening, coming to it from the old Delmonico's on Madison Square, where for half a dozen years or more before the arrival of Mr. Boldt in New York, he had been engaged in the business of making friends for himself.



FROM A DRAWING BY LOUIS H. RUYL
THE GREAT BALLROOM OF THE WALDORF-ASTORIA
For a Quarter of a Century New York's Most Distinguished Salon for Public and for Private Entertaining. It Truly Deserves the Title, Palatial.

And Oscar, too, has a powerful faculty for making friends.

To organize a kitchen and dining-room force for a five-hundred-room hotel, that aimed at the outset to be a world-leader in each detail of its service, was no small task. Added to that was the fact—unfortunate, but true—that the Waldorf kitchen at the beginning was badly designed for the great loads that were to be thrust upon it.

The Waldorf pioneered, truly. There were few precedents by which its architects and furnishers might be guided. It was a part—and a very difficult part—of their task to establish precedents, to help in that bygone day to win for the house her title of “the mother of the modern hotel.” But how perplexing it all was—away back there in 1893. No skilled or experienced efficiency hotel engineer to say: so many square feet of space for the kitchen, so many for the laundry, so many for refrigeration—all the rest of it. Instead, Boldt and Oscar and the late Tom Hilliard, the general manager of the house (promoted after a number of years of valuable service at the Bellevue), were puzzling their shrewd heads nearly off, trying to plan efficient working quarters—and then finding in that fearful summer that much of their work had to be entirely done over.

In the winter of 1893 the Waldorf really began to come into its own. Not only had New York caught on to the real loveliness—back of all the sheer opulence and magnificence—of its new toy, but the rest of the country had followed likewise. Boldt was never an advertiser. He was not well schooled in the fine art of publicity as it is practised today. Yet he was far from being a mere beginner in these things. He had a real knowledge of psychology, of men and of the workings of their minds. And he believed firmly that, in the long run, the very best advertisement for his wonderful new hotel

would be the unvarying high quality of its service. Upon the things that went to make this quality, he never ceased to hammer. Perfection of hotel-keeping—was his god. To that great god he made his constant prayers.

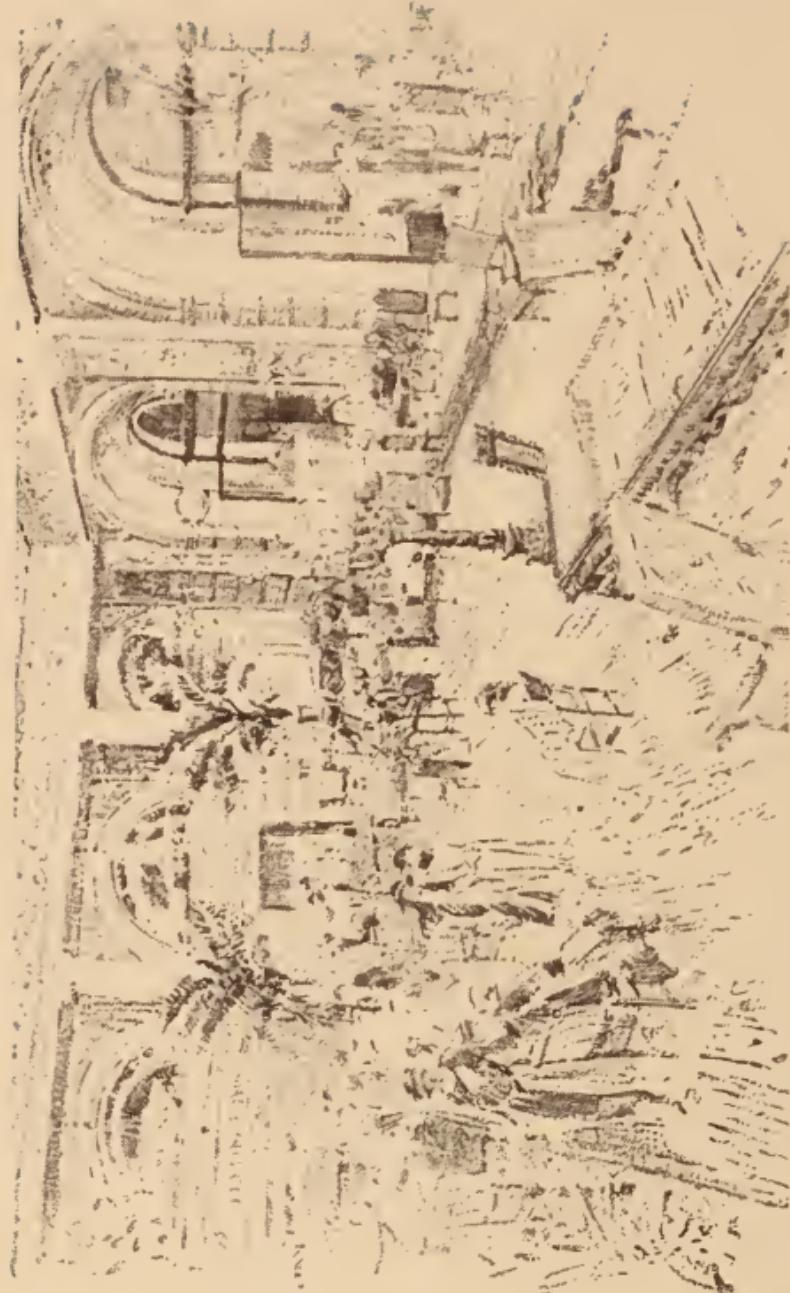
Yet, large as was the Waldorf, it was not nearly large enough. The demands upon its hospitality grew more pressing each month. New York now was coming uptown by leaps and by bounds. Fifth Avenue as a residence thoroughfare—between Twelfth Street and Fiftieth, at least—was gone. In place of the old brown-stone and red-brick fronts were coming shops—shops of high degree and of wonderful loveliness in all of their offerings—but shops none the less. Yet they but added to the *eclat* and to the prestige of the Waldorf, and to the terrific demands for rooms, particularly in the more crowded seasons of the year. To be a room-clerk in the old Thirty-third Street office during Horse Show week or that of the beginning of the opera season was no sinecure. One had to have the wit and the diplomacy of a Talleyrand or a Disraeli—or both of them together. In addition to all of this there was an increasing demand upon the hotel for formal social functions of almost every conceivable sort. Mr. Bagby was organizing his Monday Morning Musicales; dining clubs, such as the Southern Society and that of the Ohio, and the Sphinx Club were fairly springing into existence, with the superior cuisine of the Waldorf always as the largest excuse for their being.

Temporary relief was gained in 1895 when five or six small red-brick residences in Thirty-third Street, just to the west, were torn down and a five-story extension to the main building (so planned in its foundations and construction framework as to be capable of bearing many more floors, if it ever should become necessary) was begun. To make room for this wing, Mr. Boldt sacrificed the original "No. 13," in which

he had dwelt prior to the completion of the hotel, and which since then had been occupied by the cigar and wine importation company which he organized under its name. In its place came a new "No. 13," however—a complete private residence built into the hotel structure so that its separate identity could never be suspected, even from the small street door which served as its own individual entrance. This home Mr. Boldt occupied for a number of years—up to the completion of an even larger one in Thirty-seventh Street, just back of Tiffany's.

It was in the new ballroom of the wing extension that the Bradley-Martins gave their great party, and because it was such a very great party as to cause the room itself to be known as the Bradley-Martin room, it is quite worth another interruption to this narrative. It was given on the evening of February 10, 1897. To say that New York was agog over the affair is putting the matter very lightly indeed. In public interest it completely overshadowed both the Lexow investigation and the steadily growing Cuban trouble. Some eight or nine hundred selected folk were bidden to pass the carefully guarded portals; and the list of invited personages for this event for a long time remained the accepted list of those who were really in the inner circles of New York society. Three bands supplied the music for the occasion—two in the new ballroom and the other in the old. The ball began with four quadrilles. Afterwards there followed a cotillion, led by Elisha Dyer, Jr., dancing with Mrs. Bradley-Martin, and a supper. The party did not end until long after five o'clock in the morning. But when it was done, the place of the Waldorf in the sun of New York's society was firmly fixed.

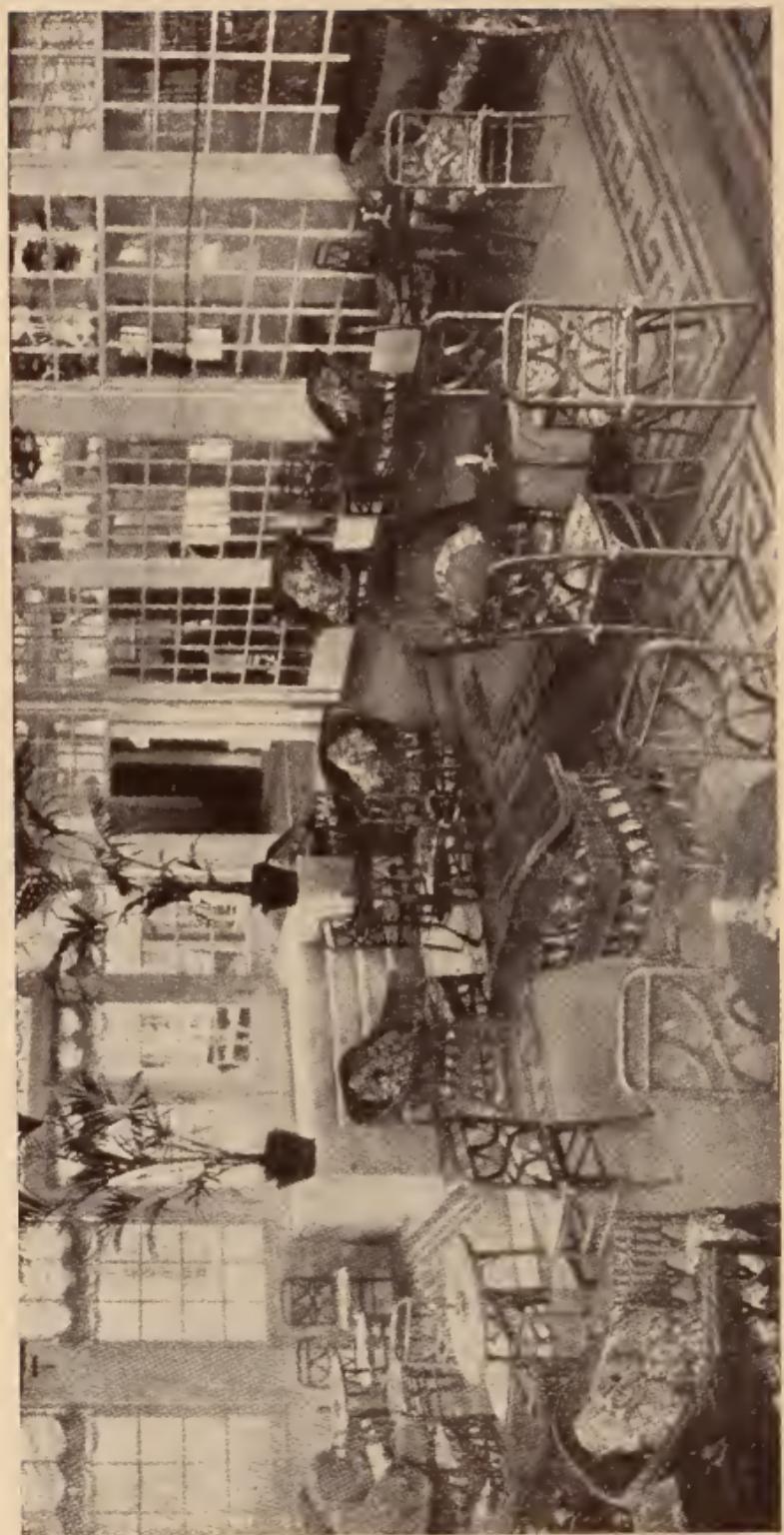
From the hour that he had first opened his New York hotel, Boldt had worried incessantly



FROM A DRAWING BY LOUIS H. RUYL
THE BLUE ROOM OF THE ASTORIA
This Vast Inner Court with its Surrounding Galleries still Remains the Most Spacious and Impressive Hotel Lounge in America

about what might appear upon some immediately adjoining corner. The entire neighborhood was in the course of a rapid transition. The old buildings around about were coming down, right and left. Boldt felt that any day any one of them might be replaced by a huge hotel which would appear as an immediate rival to his Waldorf. His particular worries he reserved for the Thirty-fourth Street corner, still occupied by the John Jacob Astor residence. Slowly there had grown in his imaginative mind a hope that some day that site might be occupied by a near twin to the Waldorf, which might be operated in conjunction with it. But common sense did its best to dash that hope. The long-standing estrangement between the two branches of the Astor family seemed to make such a possibility entirely out of the question. Yet disquieting rumors continued to come to Boldt about the future of that plot immediately adjoining his hotel. Once he heard that an apartment house would go upon it, again that it would hold a department store, finally that a hotel would presently appear upon that corner. This last disquieted the proprietor of the Waldorf most of all. He made immediate efforts to accomplish the impossible—to bring the warring houses of Astor into accord, in this matter at least.

The John Jacob Astor branch was also represented by an estate agent, Mr. George F. Peabody. The eventual bringing together of the branches was accomplished by Mr. Bartlett, working in consultation with Mr. Peabody. It was then definitely decided to build a hotel on the John Jacob Astor property, to be called the Astoria and to be operated jointly with the Waldorf. Mr. Hardenbergh, who had designed the original house, was asked to prepare the plans for it. And it was discovered that the foresight of George C. Boldt had caused the main floor of the Waldorf to be set high enough



PHOTOGRAPH BY DRUCKER & CO.

THE FOYER OF THE ROOF GARDEN OF THE WALDORE-ASTORIA

*A Fine Touch of Modernity Added to the Historic Hotel under the Direction of L. M. Boomer.
In Summer a Public Dancing Place and in Winter Used for Dinners and Private Dances Also.*

above the Thirty-third Street level to come just even with the pavement of Thirty-fourth Street (there is a considerable variation between the levels of these two parallel cross streets.) You hardly ever could beat the proprietor of the Waldorf on long-distance vision.

The John Jacob Astor estate, while finally agreeing to the joint hotel plan, held tightly to its rights. The Astoria was not only to be built entirely separate from the Waldorf in every way, shape and manner, but Boldt was required to put up a bond that would provide for funds for the immediate closing by brick and stone of every opening in the division wall that separated them. This was done. And in the spring of 1895 the demolition of John Jacob Astor's house was begun. And but a few months later the construction of a sixteen-story hotel followed.

By the summer of 1896 the Astoria was well upon its way toward completion. The details of its magnificence were beginning to seep out into New York. More than the original Waldorf ever had been, this house was to be recognized as a semi-public institution. Its very coming seemed to mark a distinctive change in the urban civilization of America. Sharp observers of our social customs began to perceive a definite tendency on the part of well-to-do folk to make their real homes in the country, coming to New York for but three or four or possibly five or six months in the winter. To cater to these folk was the special desire of the Waldorf-Astoria. Gradually it was to become slightly less a hotel for the mere feeding and housing of travelers and considerably more a semi-public institution designed for furnishing the prosperous residents of the New York metropolitan district with all the luxuries of urban life. With this in view, great attention was given to the planning of the ballrooms and other apartments of public assemblage in the Astoria.

The Astor Gallery alone—in the style of Louis XV and an exact replica of the historic Crystal Room at the Soubise Palace, Paris—would have been a great acquisition of itself, for any hotel. Yet it was overshadowed by the main ballroom adjoining, which remains to this day, after all these years, the most sumptuous apartment of its sort in New York, if not indeed in all America. To paint its lesser murals Turner and Low and Simmons were summoned by Colonel Astor; for its giant ceiling the genius of E. H. Blashfield was employed. The results speak for themselves.

The semi-public character of the new Astoria was reflected also in its spacious rooms upon the ground floor. Into it—upon the Thirty-fourth Street side of the enlarged and hyphenated hotel—were moved the offices and accounting departments of the combined establishments. An open court, a twin to the Palm Garden, but a full two stories in height, was built adjoining that room. And likewise a Fifth Avenue restaurant similar in size and type and immediately adjoining the Fifth Avenue restaurant of the original Waldorf. The men's cafe was moved out of the Oak Room and into the Astoria, and Mr. Boldt conceded to it at last, a standing bar, a huge affair (eventually four-sided), which at once became a tremendous success and which was in no little way responsible for the Waldorf-Astoria becoming known in New York as "the club of all clubs." In its cafe at five in the afternoon could ever be found the representative men of the town. To that room Wall Street adjourned at the close of business downtown. And the late tickers buzzed with the gossip of what was being said and done at the Waldorf that evening.

As a final concession to a really public institution, there was "Peacock Alley," as some irrepressible reporter immediately dubbed the glorious main corridor along the Thirty-fourth



PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMPBELL STUDIOS
THE LATE GEORGE C. BOLDT

Street side of the hyphenated hotel. If the Waldorf-Astoria was "the club of all clubs" of New York, Peacock Alley was at once "the street of all streets." Through it marched the smartness of the town—masculine as well as feminine. To see; in Peacock Alley, and to be seen, in Peacock Alley;—that was the proper thing. And no one knew this better—or loved it better, from the bottom of his big heart—than one George C. Boldt.

The Astoria side of the big hotel was formally opened upon the evening of November 1, 1897. Again there was a great concert, and again it rained—fiercely and furiously. But again the enthusiasm of New York society over its great toy refused to be dampened. Mrs. Richard Irvin repeated her remarkable success of the opening of the Waldorf side of the house. This time the proceeds of the concert were to be given to not less than four institutions: the Loomis Sanitarium for Consumptives, the Babies' and Mothers' Hospital, the Saturday and Sunday Woman's Auxiliary Hospital, and the Babies' Ward and the Day Nursery at the Post-Graduate Hospital.

The opening ceremony began in the afternoon with a fairy spectacle, *The Realm of the Rose*, given by one hundred children of well-known New York families. In the evening was the more formal affair, again a concert—this time by Anton Seidl's orchestra, which was placed in the Astor Gallery. After the concert the guests of the evening went to the great ballroom, where, upon its stage, Mr. John Drew, Miss Maude Adams and their company gave the second act of *Rosemary*, then a raging New York success. A buffet supper was served afterwards, and again a group of well-known young men acted as ushers to show the entire house to the guests. As a house-warming it was a most complete affair. And as an aid to charity—practically every feature of it being

donated—it was a tremendous inspiration.

For the next seventeen or eighteen years the record of the Waldorf-Astoria reads as a succession of successes. Distinguished visitors came to it—in greater numbers than ever before. Shortly before the completion of the Astoria, that greatest of all modern Chinamen—Li Hung Chang—came to visit the Waldorf. The memories of his visit still linger in Thirty-third Street. And some time after the completion of the newer part of the house came the Crown Prince of Siam, a pleasant, boyish fellow, with an unspeakable interest in the Western world.

But Mr. Boldt's hour of greatest triumph arrived in the visit of Prince Henry of Prussia to his hotel, in February, 1902. His pride on that occasion was almost unbounded. The preparations for it were without a parallel. He drilled the servants and he re-drilled them. He rehearsed them in every detail of the parts they were to play in the reception of the hotel's most distinguished visitor. Prince Henry came and went, and the Waldorf-Astoria finally took his visit as a mere detail of its career. There came other visitors, in increasing number. A 1,000-room hotel was not less than a marvel in the New York of that day. The Grand Ballroom, the Astor Gallery and all the rest of the huge public rooms were engaged night after night for weeks and for months in advance—many afternoons and even mornings as well. The after-theatre supper business was lessening, although ever and ever so slightly, as the center of the theater district moved up and away from Thirty-fourth Street. But the business of the neighborhood grew, and still is growing, by leaps and by bounds. Which means that luncheon has become a vast meal at the Waldorf-Astoria.

Then the blackness of real tragedy, the death of Mr. Boldt in 1916. Mrs. Boldt had died some years before. Her passing was a terrible

PHOTOGRAPH BY DRUCKER & CO.

A TYPICAL RECEPTION ROOM

Despite the Magnificence of the Furnishings of the Waldorf-Astoria, its Private Suites Retain an Atmosphere of Real Comfort and Homelike Ease



blow to her husband—the termination of a perfect partnership. From her death he never really recovered. He strove to get back into the older order of things, but never entirely successfully. And his own passing came finally as no great astonishment to those of his cronies who had known of the deep attachment between this super-hotel man and his wife.

Here was a real blow for the Waldorf-Astoria to weather. Now it needed all of its prestige to come through rough sailing. The skipper was gone. For a little time the ship had a hard battle ahead of her. That she finally weathered it was due more than any one thing to the loyalty of her crew—from Oscar right down to the humblest employee of the institution. Her graduates—Hilliard and Marshall and Amer and Woods and Nulle and others, too—came loyally to her assistance. She pulled through. Another George Boldt came. But young Boldt has never had the taste for hotel-keeping that his father possessed. He preferred to seek other pursuits. Oscar remained. Oscar still remains. Oscar is on the job.

A new captain has come up on the bridge. Three years ago, when the younger generation of Boldt announced its intention to withdraw from the management of the Waldorf-Astoria, there was a deal of doubt and perplexity as to the future of the house. Then it was that a shrewd and strategic move was made by its several owners. Down Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets, but a short block away, at Broadway and Sixth Avenue, a huge new hotel had arisen, but a decade before. This house—the McAlpin—was under the management of Mr. L. M. Boomer. He, too, possesses a rare degree of the imaginative faculty that was of such great aid to Boldt. And he attracted the attention of General Coleman du Pont whose

PHOTOGRAPH BY DRUCKER & CO.

"DINNER AT EIGHT!"

In Addition to its Public Restaurants and Banquet Halls, the Waldorf-Astoria Possesses a Large Number of Small Dining-rooms in its Suites, Admirably Adapted to Every Form of Small Private Entertainment



great constructive genius has been repeatedly shown in recent years, not only in the upbuilding of the huge powder industry that bears his family's name, but in that monumental downtown enterprise, the Equitable Building. Because of the immediate success of the McAlpin under Boomer, General du Pont visualized the reincarnation of the Waldorf. A man of action, he said, instantly:

"Boomer, I will take it, if you will run it."

Boomer agreed. He has shown a real ability in bringing modern efficiency methods into the hotel business, which has not been without its opportunity for them. This combination of imagination and common sense has brought Boomer forward pretty rapidly in the hotel world. In conjunction with the genius and the great prestige of General du Pont, it brought him, a little less than three years ago, into the overlordship of the Waldorf-Astoria, and then, shortly afterwards, into that of two famous out-of-town houses: the Bellevue-Stratford, of Philadelphia (successor to Boldt's little Bellevue), and the historic Willard's, of Washington.

Mr. Boomer elected not to take direct management of the Waldorf-Astoria, not at least in the sense that Mr. Boldt had managed it. His other business interests—he is today a product of that remarkable American tendency to consolidate every conceivable form of business—would not permit that. But he selected for the Boldt post a hotel man possessing very many of the Boldt qualities—Roy Carruthers, who had had a fine preliminary schooling as managing director, first, of the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, and then of the new Pennsylvania in New York. Carruthers is also a swift maker of friends. Yet back of his ability to smile and to hand-shake is a quick, sure, business judgment that registers and registers right—almost invariably. Under the two years of his adminis-



PHOTOGRAPH BY DRUCKER & CO.

A DRAWING ROOM IN A LARGE SUITE

Showing one of the Numerous Valuable Tapestries Which Embellish the Beautifully Appointed Private Apartments in the Waldorf-Astoria

tration of the Waldorf-Astoria that have already elapsed, the house has come back quickly into its old-time vigor and public esteem.

What is to be the future of the Waldorf-Astoria?

Time—and time alone—can answer that question. Mr. Boldt had a way of saying that forty years was the measure of the life of a first-class hotel in New York; at any rate as a really first class hotel. But his estimate was gauged largely by the ceaseless uptown growth of Manhattan. That factor has now been changed—very largely. The business section which has been in the process of a steady movement northward for considerably more than a century has now come to Central Park. That great open space forms a natural barrier to it. To split upon both sides of the Park obviously is not going to be satisfactory. The only answer is that the great business section of Manhattan Island must remain south of Fifty-ninth Street. Other factors have interjected themselves into the situation—the placing of the rapid transit subways, the multiplication of bridges and tunnels across and under the North and East Rivers, and last, but not least, the building of the great Pennsylvania Station at Seventh Avenue and Thirty-third Street. Considering all of these things in their real importance, it now begins to look as if the great hotel and retail shopping section of New York was to “stay put” for a considerable number of years, at any rate.

The house itself seemingly was built to last for all time. Since the completion of its final half, many other palatial hotels have sprung up upon the Island of Manhattan. The most of these have been built upon the success of the Waldorf-Astoria. Very truly has that famous



VALENTINE'S MANUAL
THE JOHN JACOB ASTOR AND WILLIAM ASTOR HOUSES ON FIFTH AVENUE
WHERE THE WALDORF-ASTORIA NOW STANDS
*They are the Houses with the Yard Between, and on the Next Corner was the Stately
Marble Mansion of A. T. Stewart, later the Manhattan Club*

tavern been called "the mother of hotels." Yet the mother holds her own amongst her children. Middle age has only served to bring her great dignity, to add to the soft maturity of her beauty. Her great public rooms are as lovely as they were in the day that first they were opened. The furnishings and the decorations have been vastly modernized. In many ways they have been improved. The automobile made the famous *porte-cochere* of the Astoria, built in the carriage days of 1897, an impossibility. In its place has come the lovely Italian room, perhaps the most charming candy shop in all the world.

The future of the Waldorf-Astoria?

To prophesy far into the future of any institution in a great and rapidly changing city like New York is sheerest folly. But for a decade—two decades—three decades to come, the future of the Waldorf seems assured. It will continue to be the house of good service, the house of good eating, the house of good comfort of every sort. To the vastness of its acquired prestige it steadily is adding new laurels. It is one of the few hotels in America known internationally. In 1893, Eulalie, princess of old Spain, came to stop under its roof; nine years later came the affable Henry of Prussia; just yesterday, it seems, came the King and the Queen of the Belgians—heroic figures of the most terrible war of all history. And upon their heels, that boyish young Briton who seems to be destined to be the reigning monarch of the most powerful kingdom upon the face of the earth. All these, and hundreds of others from overseas. And from the United States the tens and hundreds of thousands. In the vast accumulation of the carefully preserved registers of the hotel is the real *Who's Who of America*. There is not a State that is missing

in that list, and hardly a town or a village from all the way across the land.

The future of the Waldorf-Astoria?

The question now is answered. It seemingly is as firmly assured as is its past, and of that past you have just had the brief telling.



THE TAVERN TOPICS PRESS
LONG ISLAND CITY, N. Y.

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CLASSICS

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